

THE ANTIDOTE

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EXTRAVAGANCE.

When a certain terrible heroine of Edmund About's is urged by the wealthy niggard whom she has made her husband to adopt his principles of economy and to accept with him for motto "Depenser peu, gagner beaucoup" "No", she replies, "I know one much more intelligent and more amusing" and at a breath she converts him, for her motto is "Depenser beaucoup et gagner enormement".

Yet according to one of the great modern critics of national habits—a critic who certainly does not put on yellow spectacles when he wishes to examine other nations—the system of great expenditure and enormous gains which brought Mr. and Mrs. Jeffs in About's story to bankruptcy is the plan of thrift in most English households on both sides of the Atlantic. We are not able, he says, to practice self restraint; we must live at our ease, keep up a good appearance; we choose rather to add to our labor than to lessen our rate of living; instead of retrenching we strain our means to the utmost, and at the end of the year we have, at the very best, made the two ends meet. Too much labor and too great expense is his epitome of our economical errors.

It is not, however, that much of the over-expenditure he blames is compulsory; he notes that we rarely save money, but he adds that a doctor, a lawyer, and landlord has too many public or private calls on his purse—as taxes, subscriptions, education and journeys of his children, hospitality, servants, "comfortable"; and throughout his comments he treats the four last items as inevitable by the laws of our social system as any of the others—which indeed three of them are—for our hospitalities, our servants and even our

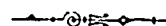
"comfortable" are no matters of choice, but rather imposed upon us as necessities of our social position, and indispensable for maintaining it. It may be sound philosophy to tell people of moderate means to live only as their personal wants and tastes require or as their purses easily allow, and to take no heed of the what-people-say unreality we call position. But position, like many other unrealities, has an important influence on our lives. To alter our social position is to alter, good or bad, our habits, our opportunities, our acquaintance, our social and frequently our material prospects—to give good bye as it were to the life that has been familiar to us and to learn our world anew. Everyone cannot afford to do this for themselves and their children; there is too much to lose, even if they should be convinced of the ultimate prudence from a pecuniary point of view, of the airy and merely borrowed thing called gentility. In very many cases a man's assured social position is a most important part of his stock in trade, like his honesty and his skill, and to let it be damaged would be about as useful economy as if a labourer were to cut off one of his arms to save expense in shirt sleeves.

The struggle to keep up appearance, which is the misery of a large proportion of respectable families, is not so merely ascribable to petty emulations and pretences as moral censors find it their readiest wisdom to declare it. Those who are involved in it are frequently better aware than their severest satirists can make them that the blunt acceptance and acknowledgement of mediocrity, or even of poverty, would make their lives far easier and more enjoyable than they find them; that only to be relieved of their efforts to seem living in luxury and refinement would be in itself luxury and refinement; that their labours and their anxieties, their pinchings and their spendings are all being used for what brings them neither comfort nor true pleasure. But the things which they struggle for, knowing them not worth the struggle, represent something which is worth the struggle, that something for which we have no better name than position, but as often

means self respect, and which when lost means decadence.

There are many people living, for their means, extravagantly, who would never strain their expenditure for the mere vanity of display, or for love of luxury, who only want to live as they needs must live to satisfy their acquaintances of their good breeding, shopkeepers and mechanics of their solvency and servants of their respectability. Their misfortune is, that while of late years the cost of living has increased, the standard of living has been raised too; but that the standard has been raised is easily said to be their own fault "Who but themselves have raised it?" is the easy retort. It is not however the people for whom the standard has long been too high who have raised it and are raising it; it is the people for whom it is not too high.

There are, of course, among us in these days, as there have been in all countries in all days since money was, spendthrifts and cheats who rush foremost into excess of fashion and outmillionaire the millionaires; but one may fairly set aside these or count them among those with whom they for a while pass muster, in saying that costly ways are begun by those who do not feel the cost.



ENCOURAGING PARAGRAPHS.

Rhythm (time) is the soul of music. It is a difficult matter to attain absolute certainty in time. Many fail therein during the whole of their life. The sense of time can only be developed by counting aloud, especially in movements of unequal rhythm. The subdividing of the beats of a bar into "one-and, two-and," etc., certainly does not count time, but it refines the sense of rhythm.

When practicing a new piece do not, at first, play it more quickly than it is possible for you to do without making material mistakes in fingering and time. Pay special attention at the same time to a clean touch, to an accurate time-value being given to notes and rests, and habituate yourself to the immediate recognition of the signs of expression. If you cannot manage all these, even in very slow time, the piece is too difficult for you. Lay it aside, for time and trouble will be wasted.